

Election Procedures Review  
Of  
**Lewis**  
State of Washington  
2006 Primary Election



Conducted by the  
Office of the Secretary of State  
Election Certification and Training Program



# Introduction

The Washington State Legislature enacted legislation in 1992 mandating that the Office of the Secretary of State review county election procedures and practices. The Election Certification and Training Program was established within the Elections Division of the Office of the Secretary of State to conduct reviews and to provide for the certification of election administrators. In 2005, the Legislature expanded the Election Certification and Training Program to require that each County Auditor's Office be reviewed at least once every three years. They also added a requirement for the Program to conduct a follow-up visit to verify the county has taken the steps to correct the problems noted in the report.

The election review process is governed by RCW 29A.04.510 through 29A.04.590 and Chapter 434-260 of the Washington Administrative Code. Reviews are conducted at regular intervals in conjunction with a county primary, special or general election, at the direction of the Secretary of State.

Pursuant to RCW 29A.04.570(1)(b), the Election Certification and Training Program conducted an election review in Lewis County during the 2006 Primary Election cycle. Kay Ramsay and Amber Cervantes, Election Program Specialists, represented the Election Certification and Training Program during the review. Gary Zandell, Lewis County Auditor, Mariann Zumbuhl and other members of the staff participated on behalf of the Lewis County Auditor's Office.

Lewis County allowed the reviewers to thoroughly review and examine all aspects of the election processes. The county provided documentation and materials during the review which greatly contributed to a successful examination process.

Both the reviewers and the Lewis County Auditor's Office approached the review in a spirit of cooperation. The State commends the Lewis County Auditor's Office for its organization and preparation in making the review process a positive and useful experience.

Contents of this report are based on observations of election practices and procedures and on interviews with county election personnel. The reviewers obtained information based on the actual observation of a particular procedure, based on verbal explanation or written procedures. In all cases, the predominant concern is whether or not the county's actions constitute compliance with the intent of statutes and rules.

The purpose of this review report is to provide Lewis County Auditor's Office with a useful evaluation of its election procedures and policies and to encourage procedural consistency in the administration of elections throughout the state. This review report includes a series of recommendations and/or suggestions that are intended to assist Lewis County in improving and enhancing its election processes.

The reviewers are statutorily prohibited from making any evaluation, finding, or recommendation regarding the validity of any primary or election or of any canvass of the election returns. Consequently, this review report should not be interpreted as affecting, in any way, the validity of the outcome of any election or of any canvass of election returns.

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# Overview

During the course of this review, several county processes and procedures were either observed or reviewed, including pre-election procedures, election day procedures, post-election procedures, canvassing, reconcile , and certification. Comments regarding some of these observations are noted here and recommendations follow these observations.

Outstanding teamwork was demonstrated by the election staff in Lewis County. This is a crucial element in any office, but becomes even more important when the number of office staff is limited. The Auditor's Office did an admirable job of administering a difficult primary election. The election staff is dedicated and conscientious.

Issues surrounding ballot security must be addressed by the Elections Department. Staff must ensure that access to ballots during all phases of processing is documented, including the period of time prior to and after tabulation.

The election staff should concentrate on updating the written procedures. Administering an election is very complicated and requires great attention to detail. Updating the written procedures is essential for consistency and for documenting compliance with election laws.

Some of the recommendations in this report require relatively minor changes in the county's procedures. However, because elections are so complicated, even minor changes can have a major impact on the election process.

The following recommendations and suggestions will improve and enhance the county's election procedures and policies.

# Recommendations

The following recommendations indicate areas where the county is out of compliance with the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), the Washington Administrative Code (WAC), the Washington State Constitution, or Federal election law. The reviewers provide a description of the county's procedure, a citation of the applicable law, and a recommendation based on the citation.

## Precinct Boundaries

Harmony Precinct does not meet the requirements of RCW 29A.16.050 as it is broken into two completely separate pieces. There are also several precincts which follow section, township, and range lines rather than visible features as required by statute.

*RCW 29A.16.050 requires, "(2) Every voting precinct shall be composed, as nearly as practicable, of contiguous and compact areas. (3) "...changes to the boundaries of any precinct shall follow visible, physical feature delineated on the most current maps provided by the United States census bureau."*

**Recommendation:** Harmony Precinct's boundaries must be corrected as soon as possible. This may mean creating a new precinct for one of Harmony's separated areas. The next time changes are made to Lewis County precincts, visible features should be used to draw precinct boundary lines rather than section, township, and range lines.

## Notice of Election

The Lewis County Elections Department correctly published a Notice of Election in a timely manner. However, Precinct Committee Officer candidates were not included in the notice.

*RCW 29A.52.311 requires, "The notice must contain the proper party designations, the names and address of all persons who have filed a declaration of candidacy to be voted upon at the primary..."*

**Recommendation:** In the future, all candidates for all required offices must be listed, including those candidates for Precinct Committee Officer. If Lewis County publishes a voters' pamphlet, Precinct Committee Officer candidate names are not required to be included.

## Verification Notice

The verification notice sent by the Lewis County Elections Department does not provide return pre-paid postage as required by statute.

*RCW 29A.08.030(1) requires, "The verification notice must be designed to include a postage prepaid, preaddressed return form by which the applicant may verify or send information."*

**Recommendation:** The verification notice must be redesigned to include return postage.

### **Confirmation Notice**

The Lewis County Elections Department sends a confirmation notice only to the address on the voter's registration record and not to any other addresses that the voter could reasonably expect to receive mail.

*RCW 29A.08.030(3) states, "‘Confirmation notice’ means a notice sent to a registered voter by first class forwardable mail at the address indicated on the voter's permanent registration record and to any other address at which the county auditor or secretary of state could reasonably expect mail to be received by the voter in order to confirm the voter's residence address."*

**Recommendation:** The election staff in Lewis County needs to send the confirmation notice to any address where they could reasonably expect the voter to receive mail.

### **Notice of Certification Meeting**

A single notice is published stating that the canvassing of ballots will begin on a particular date and will convene 'as needed' until certification. The notice does not specify a date, time, or location for certifying the election.

*RCW 29A.60.140(5) requires, "Meetings of the county canvassing board are public meetings under chapter 42.30 RCW."*

*RCW 29A.60.200 states, "Before canvassing the returns of a primary or election, the chair of the county legislative authority or the chair's designee shall administer an oath to the county auditor or the auditor's designee attesting to the authenticity of the information presented to the canvassing board. This oath must be signed by the county auditor or designee and filed with the returns of the primary or election."*

*The county canvassing board shall proceed to verify the results from the precincts and the absentee ballots. The board shall execute a certificate of the results of the primary or election signed by all members of the board or their designees. Failure to certify the returns, if they can be ascertained with reasonable certainty, is a crime under RCW 29A.84.720."*

**Recommendation:** Future notices must specify when the County Canvassing Board will certify an election, including the date, time, location and purpose of the meeting.

### **Questionnaires to cities, towns and districts**

The Lewis County Elections Department correctly sends a questionnaire to all of the cities, towns, and districts in the county to obtain information necessary for candidate filing. The questionnaire lists the current information regarding incumbents, positions, and terms, and asks the district to provide salary information and confirm that the information is correct. However, the notice is only mailed in the odd years, rather than each year as required.

*WAC 434-215-005 requires, "Prior to May 1 of each year, the county auditor shall send a questionnaire to the administrative authority of each local jurisdiction for which the auditor is the candidate filing officer subject to the provisions of RCW 29A.04.320 and 29A.04.330."*

**Recommendation:** The content of the questionnaire sent by the County Elections Department meets the intent of the law. However, the questionnaire needs to be sent each year. The date for

sending the notice will be changing because of the change in the date of the primary, but it will continue to be required that it is sent yearly.

### **Order of Offices and Ballot Measures**

The Policies and Procedures manual does not include procedures for the placement of local offices and ballot measures on the ballot.

*WAC 434-230-030 requires, "For other local ballot measures and offices, each county shall establish written procedures to determine the order in which local units of government are to be listed on the ballot. Such order of local governmental units shall be consistent on official, absentee, and sample ballots. ... Such procedures are to provide consistency from election to election within a county."*

**Recommendation:** The Auditor's Office must add to the Policies and Procedures manual procedures for the placement of local offices and ballot measures on the ballot.

### **Forms & Applications**

The County Auditor's Office does not send a ballot or a ballot application to inactive voters prior to an election.

*RCW 29A.48.010(3) requires, "The auditor shall send each inactive voter either a ballot or an application to receive a ballot at least eighteen days before a primary, general election, or special election."*

**Recommendation:** The Elections Department must send each inactive voter either a ballot or an application to receive a ballot at least 18 days before an election.

### **Hospital Absentee Ballot**

The Auditor's Office does not have a Hospital Absentee Ballot Request Form.

*WAC 434-250-030(4) states: "As authorized by RCW 29A.40.080, requests for an absentee ballot may be made by a resident of a health care facility, as defined by RCW 70.37.020(3). Each county shall provide an application form for such a registered voter to apply for a single absentee ballot by messenger on election day. The messenger may pick up the voter's absentee ballot and deliver it to the voter and return it to the county auditor's office."*

**Recommendation:** The Lewis County Auditor's Office must create a form and make it available for a voter to request a Hospital Absentee Ballot.

### **Fax and E-mail Ballots**

The letter accompanying faxed ballots currently says, "...ballot and oath envelope should not be faxed back to us..." The fax ballot instructions do provide instructions for faxing back the ballot, which reflect current law. This is conflicting information. The e-mail ballot instructions also contain incorrect information.

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*WAC 434-208-060 requires, "... the county auditor shall accept and file in his or her office electronic facsimile transmissions of the following documents: ... (4) Voted ballots, provided the voter agrees to waive the secrecy of his or her ballot...."*

*RCW 29A.40.150 requires, "(5) A voter may fax a voted ballot and the accompanying envelope if the voter agrees to waive secrecy. The ballot will be counted if the original documents are received before certification of the election...."*

**Recommendation:** Instructions for both fax and e-mail ballots need to be updated to have the same, correct instructions for returning a fax or e-mail ballot, which will reflect current law.

### **Sample Ballots**

Upon request, the Elections Department prints a sample ballot on white paper specific to the precinct of the voter making the request.

*WAC 434-230-010 requires, "Sample paper ballots shall be printed in substantially the same form as official ballots, but shall be a different color than the official ballot. Sample ballots for counties using electronic or mechanical voting systems shall be printed in a manner that makes them easily distinguishable from the official ballot. ..."*

*Names of the candidates in each office to appear on the primary ballot shall be arranged on the sample ballot in the order provided by RCW 29A.36.121. The names of the candidates in each office to appear on the general election ballot shall be listed on the sample ballot in the order in which their names appear on the official ballot. State measures and local measures shall be in the same order as they appear on the official ballot."*

**Recommendation:** The sample ballots must include the names of all candidates and all offices that appear on the primary or general election ballot.

### **Special Absentee Ballot Request**

The Auditor's Office has an application for a special absentee ballot. It includes a statement to be signed by the voter that the voter believes he or she will be unable to vote and return a regular absentee ballot. The form does not have a place for the voter to request a regular absentee ballot.

*WAC 434-250-030(3)(b) requires the application to include " A checkbox requesting that a single absentee ballot be forwarded as soon as possible...."*

*WAC 434-250-040(2)(b) requires the application to also include, " Notice that the voter may request and subsequently vote a regular absentee ballot, and that if the regular absentee ballot is received by the county auditor prior to certification of the election, it will be tabulated and the special absentee ballot will be voided."*

**Recommendation:** The Lewis County Auditor's Office should amend the application to allow a voter to request a regular absentee ballot and to include all necessary instructions.

### **Mail Ballots**

Counties have the option of forwarding absentee ballots. If a county chooses to forward ballots, an additional warning is to be included. Lewis County does not include this warning with the forwarded ballots.



*RCW 29A.40.091 requires, "If the county auditor chooses to forward absentee ballots, he or she must include with the ballot a clear explanation of the qualifications necessary to vote in that election and must also advise a voter with questions about his or her eligibility to contact the county auditor. This explanation may be provided on the ballot envelope, on an enclosed insert, or printed directly on the ballot itself. If the information is not included, the envelope must clearly indicate that the ballot is not to be forwarded and that return postage is guaranteed."*

*WAC 434-250-070 requires, "If the county auditor chooses to forward absentee ballots, as authorized by RCW 29A.40.091, the auditor must include with the ballot an explanation that is substantially similar to the following:*

*For each jurisdiction listed on the ballot, you must reside in the jurisdiction in order to vote for that office or issue. If you have any questions about your eligibility to vote in this election, please contact your county auditor."*

**Recommendation:** If Lewis County chooses to forward absentee ballots, the proper instructions and warnings should be included with the ballot materials.

### **HAVA Provisional Ballot Free Access System:**

When Lewis County Auditor's Office receives a request for a provisional ballot, the employee verbally informs the voter at the time of issuance that the voter may call the Auditor's Office after certification of the election to learn the disposition of the ballot.

*RCW 29A.44.207 requires, "The official shall then give the voter written information advising the voter how to ascertain whether the vote was counted and, if applicable, the reason why the vote was not counted."*

**Recommendation:** The Auditor's Office must provide each provisional voter a written notice describing how the voter can determine if the ballot was counted and, if applicable, the reason why it was not counted.

### **Logic and Accuracy Test**

Because both major political parties did not have candidates in every race, some races did not include a candidate on each party ballot. When no candidate is listed, a spot for voters to write-in a candidate is provided. The test deck that was prepared by the Auditor's Office for the logic and accuracy test did not thoroughly test for write-in votes for these races.

*WAC 434-335-445 requires, "Each county shall produce a test deck of ballots to be used in the pretest and the official logic and accuracy test to verify that the vote tabulating system is programmed to correctly count the ballots. ...The test deck must also test that the vote tabulating system is programmed to accurately count write-in votes, overvotes, undervotes, and blank ballots."*

*WAC 434-335-480 states, "Prior to the official logic and accuracy test each county employing an optical scan balloting system must thoroughly test all programming and system components. The test must verify the office programming by thoroughly testing each individual office, the ballot style logic to insure that all offices are included on the intended ballot faces, and that the program is accumulating all offices. The county auditor or deputy must certify that these tests have been completed prior to the official logic and accuracy test."*

**Recommendation:** In the future, when preparing a test deck, the Auditor's Office must ensure that each individual office is thoroughly tested, whether a candidate has filed for that office or not.

### **Ballot Security**

The following practices were observed in Lewis County:

- 1) Ballots were stored in open trays in a secured room. Individual trays were not sealed nor secured. If staff left for short periods of time, the door was locked but not sealed. Ballots were stored in a secured room but were not further sealed between receipt and tabulation. The Lewis County Auditor's Office has since purchased containers which can be sealed individually.
- 2) When ballots were removed from the ballot box, the ballots were not counted.

*WAC 434-250-110(2) requires, "Following initial processing, all absentee ballots must be kept in secure storage until final processing. Secure storage must employ the use of numbered seals and logs, or other security measures which will detect any inappropriate or unauthorized access to the secured ballot materials when they are not being prepared or processed by authorized personnel."*

*WAC 434-250-130 states, "Each county auditor shall maintain an audit trail with respect to the processing of absentee ballots, which shall include, but not be limited to, the following: ... (6) A documentation of the security procedures undertaken to protect the integrity of all ballots after receipt, including the seal numbers used to secure the ballots during all facets of the absentee ballot process...."*

*RCW 29A.60.110 requires, "Immediately after their tabulation, all ballots counted at a ballot counting center must be sealed in containers that identify the primary or election and be retained for at least 60 days or according to Federal law, whichever is longer."*

**Recommendation:** In the course of the review, the reviewers discussed ballot security with Lewis County Elections Department staff. The Auditor's Office should secure all ballots whenever the ballots are not being processed. It is important to document access to the ballots at any given time. The Auditor's Office has already implemented this recommendation.

### **County Auditor's Office as a Polling Place**

Because Lewis County votes entirely by mail, the Auditor's Office is a polling place. There was no United States flag or voting instructions in 16 pt. font as is required. The ballot box was not removed from the counter at 8:00 p.m. The ballots had been tabulated and the results printed when a voter came and deposited his ballot into the ballot box after 8:00 p.m. A second voter came to deposit a ballot and the Auditor accepted it, but did not note the time of deposit. The Auditor then removed the ballot box from the counter.

*WAC 434-250-330(1) requires, "For elections held entirely by mail, services that would have been provided at the polling place must, at a minimum, be provided at the county auditor's office...."*

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WAC 434-253-025 requires, “The following items must be posted or displayed at the polling place while it is open: ... (2) HAVA voter information poster; (3) Voting instructions printed in at least 16 point bold type....”

WAC 434-250-100(3) requires, “On election day, ballot drop boxes must be emptied at exactly 8:00 p.m. to ensure that all ballots meet the 8:00 p.m. delivery deadline.”

**Recommendation:** On election day, the Lewis County Auditor’s Office must display the United States flag and voting instructions printed in at least 16 point bold type. The ballot box must be emptied and either removed from the counter or made secure so that no ballots can be inserted after 8:00 p.m.

### **Deposit Sites**

The Lewis County Auditor’s Office is the only site for the deposit of ballots on election day.

WAC 434-250-320 states: “A county auditor conducting a county-wide election entirely by mail must provide at least two sites for the deposit of ballots. One of the deposit sites may be at the county auditor’s office. All other deposit sites must be at geographical locations that are different from the county auditor’s office. All deposit sites must meet the requirements of WAC 434-250-100.”

**Recommendation:** At a minimum, one other drop-off location must be available to voters 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. on election day.

### **Political Party Observer Training**

Lewis County did not provide political party observer training to the one observer present from the Democratic Party.

RCW 29A.12.120 requires, “(1) Before each state primary or general election at which voting systems are to be used, the county auditor shall instruct all precinct election officers appointed under RCW 29A.44.410, counting center personnel, and political party observers designated under RCW 29A.60.170 in the proper conduct of their duties. ... (4) ... No person may serve as a political party observer unless that person has received the required instruction and is familiar with the operation of the counting center and the vote tallying system and the procedures to be employed to verify the accuracy of the programming for that vote tallying system.”

**Recommendation:** Lewis County should schedule observer training for every election and notify the political parties of the time and date such training will occur.

### **Retention of Inner Security Envelopes**

Lewis County election staff discards the inner security envelopes after verifying that the envelopes are empty by looking through the punched holes.

The General Records Retention Schedule and Records Management Guidelines currently require that absentee ballot envelopes and security envelopes be retained for 22 months after a federal election and 60 days after a non-federal election.

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**Lewis County Election Review**

*RCW 40.14.060 requires, “(1) Any destruction of official public records shall be pursuant to a schedule approved under RCW 40.14.050.”*

**Recommendation:** Lewis County election staff must retain the security envelopes, in addition to the outer envelopes, according to the General Retention Schedule. The guidelines may soon change but, until then, the current laws must be followed.

### **Processing Ballots**

- 1) Ballots were not pre-inspected before being scanned into the digital vote tallying system. The Resolving Board resolved any ballots on screen identified as requiring resolution.
- 2) When resolving write-in votes, the Resolving Board counted stray marks as write-in votes when the marks should not have been counted. The reviewers noticed several ballots in which a voter had written messages on the ballot, and the writing had crossed into the response positions. During resolution, instead of deselecting that vote or sending the ballot to the County Canvassing Board to determine voter intent, the resolution board accepted the mark as a write-in vote.
- 3) There were several ballots that had been signed by the voter that should have been referred to the County Canvassing Board.
- 4) The Resolving Board was inconsistent in its decisions.

WAC 434-261-070 requires, “(1) ... *all voting positions on voted ballots shall be manually inspected on both sides of the ballot to determine whether the ballot will be readable by the vote tabulating system. This manual inspection is a required part of processing ballots. ... If the voter's intent is not clear, the ballot must be referred to the county canvassing board.*”

**Recommendation:** Ballots must be pre-inspected and appropriately referred to the County Canvassing Board. It is vital that the resolving team receive more training in use of the digital scan system, and more training on current election laws to ensure that the digital scan system is used consistently and properly. The Office of the Secretary of State has issued a “Voter Intent” manual that should be used in future elections.

### **Mismatched Signatures**

When the signature on the outer envelope does not match the signature in the voter registration record, the Auditor’s Office mails a letter, copy of the signed return envelope, copy of the signature from the original voter registration application and a new voter registration application to the voter. The office does not include a blank affidavit for the voter to sign, or explain the option of enclosing a copy of signed identification to help validate the signature.

*29A.08.710(1) requires, “The original voter registration form ... is considered confidential and unavailable for public inspection and copying.”*

*Emergency WAC 434-261-050, adopted on August 8, 2006, states:*

*(3) If the signature on the oath of an absentee or provisional ballot envelope does not match the signature on the voter registration record, the voter must either:*

*(a) Appear in person and sign a new registration form no later than the day before certification of the primary or election. The updated signature provided on the new registration*

form becomes the signature on the voter registration record for the current election and future elections; or

(b) Sign a copy of the affidavit provided by the auditor, and provide a photocopy of a valid government or tribal identification that includes the voter's current signature. The signature on the affidavit must match the signature on the identification, and both of those signatures must match the signature on the ballot envelope. The voter must return the signed affidavit and identification to the auditor no later than the day before certification of the primary or election. The county auditor may also send the voter a new registration form to update the signature on the voter registration record for future elections; or

(c) Sign a copy of the affidavit provided by the auditor in front of two witnesses who attest to the signature. The signature on the affidavit must match the signature on the ballot envelope. The voter must return the signed affidavit to the auditor no later than the day before certification of the primary or election. The county auditor may also send the voter a new registration form to update the signature on the voter registration record for future elections.

**Recommendation:** Although the copy of the original voter registration application is sent to the voter, this is not a safe procedure. If the person who signed the ballot envelope was not the voter, this person now has a copy of the voter's signature to use for possible forgery. The Auditor's Office should not send a copy of the original signature but should send a blank affidavit for the voter to sign. Voters should also be advised of the options to come into the office and sign in person, or send a copy of signed identification with the signature.

### **Disability Advisory Committee**

Each county in Washington State is required to establish a Disability Advisory Committee to assist election officials with developing a plan to improve the accessibility of elections to voters with disabilities. The Lewis County Auditor's Office had not established a Disability Advisory Committee at the time of this review. Because an Advisory Committee has not been established, they did not have a Disability Plan to review.

*RCW 29A.46.260(2) requires, "Each county shall establish and maintain an advisory committee that includes persons with diverse disabilities and persons with expertise in providing accommodations for persons with disabilities. The committee shall assist election officials in developing a plan to identify and implement changes to improve the accessibility of elections for voters with disabilities. ...*

*Counties must update the plan at least annually. The election review staff of the secretary of state shall review and evaluate the plan in conformance with the review procedure identified in RCW 29A.04.570."*

**Recommendation:** The Lewis County Auditor's Office must take the necessary steps to establish a Disability Advisory Committee as soon as possible, and adopt a plan.

# Suggestions

The following are suggestions for increasing efficiency and improving operations within the County Auditor's Office. Although these suggestions do not address issues involving compliance with state laws or administrative rules, the reviewers identified the tasks as areas of election administration in which the County Auditor might improve the efficiency and operation of the office.

## **Election Calendar**

The Elections Department does not maintain an elections calendar with dates specific to Lewis County elections.

**Suggestion:** Elections staff should seriously consider developing and maintaining an elections calendar with reminders for election related tasks.

## **Written Procedures**

The current procedures manual is comprehensive as far as including the many election related tasks, however it is not written in a step-by-step format that would allow it to be utilized by any person new to performing the tasks.

**Suggestion:** The County Auditor's Office should make creating a comprehensive, step-by-step, procedures manual a high priority. The manual should include policies and procedures for all aspects of administering elections, including the digital scan tabulation system that is new to the county. The manual is not only important to new people performing the task, but should include the many tasks in election administration that are performed infrequently. The manual would provide consistency, and document the Elections Department's compliance with the laws.

## **Processing Ballots**

Ballots were picked up from the Post Office and transported back to the Auditor's Office by only one person.

**Suggestion:** The Elections Department should consider having two people with the ballots during transportation. The Lewis County Elections Department would greatly benefit from additional staff during the election season in order to meet this suggestion.

# **County's Response to Draft Review Report**

The Election Certification and Training Program issued a Draft Review Report to the Lewis County Canvassing Board in January 2007. In accordance with WAC 434-260-145, we provided Lewis County 10 days to respond, in writing, to recommendations listed in the draft report.

The Lewis County Canvassing Board provided the following response to the Draft Review Report. The signed original of their response is on file in the Office of the Secretary of State.

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Auditor

**Larry E. Grove, CPA**  
Chief Accountant

**Beth Rosbach**  
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RE: Elections Procedures Review – Lewis County

The following is Lewis County Canvassing Board's written response to the recommendations and suggestions in the election procedures review conducted by the Office of the Secretary of State during the 2006 Primary Election.

We appreciate the outside view that has identified procedures that need to be updated and improved. Most of the items were minor in impact, but were clearly not in conformity with the current regulations or procedures. As you'll note, most of these particular recommendations have already been implemented or are in the process of completion.

### **Precinct Boundaries:**

Election staff split Harmony precinct (among other precincts) in 1992 following the 1990 census when the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Legislative redistricting created a line through Lewis County. In 2002, following the 2000 census, legislative redistricting again recombined the county into a single legislative district. As a consequence of the 2002 redistricting, all former split precincts between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> legislative districts were combined; however, this one-block portion near the city of Mossyrock was omitted in error. That portion of Harmony precinct will be combined with Klickitat precinct to the south, and a new precinct will be created for that portion north of Riffe Lake that is uninhabited and more than likely owned by Tacoma City Light. Lewis County will keep in mind the "visible & physical features" requirement when describing new precinct boundary lines.

### **Notice of Election:**

The Notice of Election will now include Precinct Committee Officers who have filed a declaration of candidacy.

### **Verification Notice:**

The 3,000 verification notices we had in office were hand delivered to our local printer to have the return pre-paid postage information added.

### **Confirmation Notice:**

As is our practice we have always mailed a confirmation notice to the new address on the change of address sticker placed on all returned mail by the US Post Office. We do not however send to the same address from which the mail was just returned. We will send to both addresses in the future knowing full well that this is a vain and useless act and a deplorable waste of tax dollars.



**Notice of Certification Meeting:**

The form was updated immediately and now lists specific dates, times and places and a copy was given to the SOS review board.

**Questionnaires to Cities, Towns and Districts:**

Duly noted.

**Order of Offices and Ballot Measures:**

The policies and procedure manual was updated and a copy was given to the SOS review board.

**Forms & Applications:**

Duly noted.

**Hospital Absentee Ballot:**

A Hospital Absentee Ballot request form was created and a copy given to the SOS review board.

**Fax and E-mail Ballots:**

The fax and e-mail instruction have been updated and a copy given to the SOS review board.

**Sample Ballots:**

Future sample ballots will be printed on colored paper.

**Special Absentee Ballot Request:**

The Special Ballot application has been updated and a copy given to the SOS review board.

**Mail Ballots:**

The cited warning on forwarded absentee ballots was included on ballots for the February and May special elections in 2006. On the September Partisan Primary we used the instructions supplied by our vender and this warning was inadvertently removed from the instructions. This printing error has been corrected and the information concerning residency in the district for eligibility to vote has been added.

**HAVA Provisional Ballot Free Access System:**

In addition to our verbal instructions to the voter, we will henceforth provide written information to provisional voters on how they may ascertain whether their vote was counted and, if applicable, the reason why the vote was not counted.

**Logic and Accuracy Test:**

In future test deck preparations, we will test for each individual office even if there is a void in candidacy and there is no candidate for that office.

**Ballot Security:**

We have created a ballot seal log to record how many ballots are removed from the counter drop box at the end of every day. We purchased containers in which to place ballots and provide for a numbered security seal.

**County Auditor's Office as a Polling Place:**

We will place a larger US flag in our office than we currently use. We will also place a HAVA voter information poster on the wall in the lobby of the office when the Secretary of State provides such a poster. We have always been diligent about removing the ballot box from the counter at exactly eight PM and were unaware that during the Primary we missed doing so for one minute? Thirty seconds?

**Deposit Sites:**

We continue to work on getting another drop location in the county besides the Auditors office.

**Political Party Observer Training:**

The appointed political party observers are well trained and have each been individually providing party oversight for approximately 15 years. This consistency by both major political parties in Lewis County has been much appreciated by this office. The individual noted in this finding was a newly elected party chairman and an unannounced drop-in. The Auditor did explain ad hoc the canvassing process and personally invited the party chairman to observe the efforts of the canvassing board clerks.

**Retention of Inner Security Envelope:**

We will retain the security envelopes according to the General Retention Schedule.

**Processing Ballots:**

With only two elegantly small and simple school levy elections under our belt with a brand new Hart voting system we got hit with that complex, pick-a-party, partisan primary. We had the normally reserved, proficient, and calm canvassing clerks revolting in general and specific confusion over vote accumulation for write-ins. Staff and canvassing board clerks have since received more vendor training and the 2006 General election process went a great deal smoother with virtually no problems associated with ballot pre-inspection and auto-resolve.

**Mismatch Signatures:**

Upon SOS review team suggestion, this procedure was changed immediately and only a letter and registration form are sent to the voter to update their signature.

**Disability Advisory Committee:**

We are working on setting up an advisory committee and adopting a plan. A local Centralia resident who works as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (blind coordinator) for DSHS has committed to participation as a committee member.

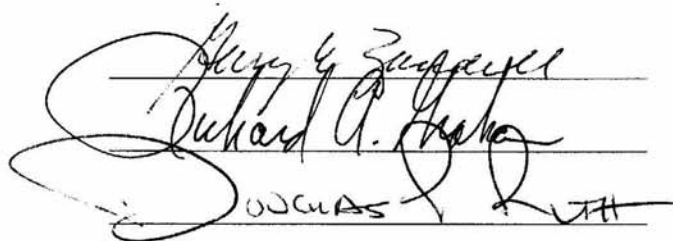
LEWIS COUNTY CANVASSING BOARD

February 5, 2007

GARY E. ZANDELL, Auditor

RICHARD GRAHAM, BOCC Chairman

DOUGLAS RUTH, Dep. Prosecutor



## Conclusion

The reviewers commend the Lewis County Auditor's Office for its election procedures. The county did an admirable job administering the election after the monumental number of recent changes to election laws. The election staff work very well together and appear dedicated to maintaining the integrity of each election.

Because of the numerous changes to election laws, as well as having a new tabulation system, additional training for the resolution teams is vital. Training should include becoming familiar with the Voter Intent manual.

The Elections Department should make creating and updating their policies and procedures manual a priority. It is crucial in documenting the department's compliance with election laws, and ensuring consistency from one election to the next.

The reviewers have made a series of recommendations and suggestions for consideration by the Lewis County Auditor and the County Canvassing Board. These are meant to enhance and improve Lewis County's procedures. The Office of the Secretary of State Election Certification and Training Program is available for any additional assistance the Auditor may request.

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Review Report Prepared by:

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Elections Program Specialist  
Office of the Secretary of State

Date: February 13, 2007

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kay Ramsay". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.